

Videoconferencing in the 2nd Judicial Circuit

The Unified Judicial System in South Dakota has an extensive network of videoconferencing systems installed at dozens of courts and court-related facilities across the state. The 2nd Judicial Circuit around Sioux Falls uses videoconferencing very heavily and in fact is a national leader in assembling a cooperative group of courts willing to share their videoconferencing systems with each other. The 2nd Circuit, Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties, has nine high-quality videoconferencing units available, both state and county-based. The units are located in courtrooms, deliberation/conference rooms, and some are portable. In just the past few months we have arranged video links to Japan, England, and Afghanistan.

Request a Video Appearance

A few notes about video links in the 2nd Circuit:

- Our videoconferencing equipment can be used by any party, attorney, or witness for any court related purpose. The 2nd Circuit currently does not charge for the use of our video systems, although there may be a charge involved for the use of private videoconferencing sites on the "far end." In those situations, the requesting party must handle all payment arrangements with those providers. In no circumstances will the Court absorb the cost of videoconferencing providers on the far end.
- The assigned judge must approve video appearances for any courtroom hearings held by that judge.
- When searching for videoconferencing locations elsewhere, requesting parties and attorneys are welcome to find or designate their own providers, or the 2nd Circuit will attempt to find one for you. We first try to find a cooperating court in the remote location willing to share their system with other courts; if that doesn't work, we'll search for private, fee-based sites next and send the information to you.
- Technical stuff: the 2nd Circuit uses only IP/internet based videoconferencing. Older style "ISDN" videoconference systems using high speed phone lines are much more complicated and expensive so we do not make "ISDN" connections.
- Technical stuff: for non-courtroom events like depositions for example, parties are welcome to record the videoconferences with your own equipment or even bring your own court reporter – however, court staff cannot record the videoconferences for you.
- Video links between just two sites are relatively quick and easy and the court is happy to facilitate them for you. Videoconferences

involving multiple sites at the same time however – for example, three or more locations in a single conference – get much more complicated and usually involve the use of a third-party videoconferencing “bridge.” We strongly try to avoid multiple-site conferences for those reasons.

- Finally, videoconferencing is become more and more common for many attorneys and can potentially save a great deal of time and money. The big-screen, high-quality county-purchased video units in the 2nd Circuit typically cost about \$1000, not including the internet feed. Attorneys may want to consider installing such systems in their own offices. We would be happy to offer advice to any attorney’s office about installing your own videoconferencing system.

For questions or more information on videoconferencing in the 2nd Circuit, please contact Court Administration at 605-367-5920, or email UJSWeb2nd@uj.s.state.sd.us